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ABSTRACT

The failure to include scholarship in the community college philosophy is a flaw that diminishes the colleges' status within higher education. A commitment to scholarship by community college professionals requires a broader definition of the term to include not only research that results in published articles, but any systematic pursuit of a topic, objective, or rational inquiry that involves critical analysis. Given this definition, the majority of community college professionals should be engaging in scholarship. Community colleges have given too little attention to scholarship for reasons that include the following: (1) in their zeal to call attention to the community college as a teaching institution, its supporters have failed to acknowledge the vital link between teaching and scholarship; (2) community colleges have rarely recognized and rewarded scholarly activities; (3) presidents and deans of instruction have generally failed to emphasize scholarship in their own roles; (4) many community college professionals do not realize that their obligation to the profession goes beyond their obligation to the job; and (5) faculty and administrators have rarely engaged in systematic approaches to the evaluation and improvement of teaching that extend beyond individual classrooms. Community colleges must overcome these barriers and demonstrate their ability to critically review and analyze the issues facing them if they are to receive community support, funding, and ultimately, students. Including scholarship as an important part of a college's rewards, tenure, promotion, and release time is an obvious first step in enhancing scholarship. Faculty and administrators should take the scholarship of teaching seriously. In so doing, they will enhance the standing and respectability of community colleges. (ALB)

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SCHOLARSHIP AND THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROFESSIONAL:

MANDATE FOR THE FUTURE

George B. Vaughan

March 30, 1989

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Paper presented at the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges Annual Conference (69th, Washington, DC, March 29-April 1, 1989)

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March 30, 1989
by George B. Vaughan

Why has scholarship failed to occupy a prominent place in the community college philosophy? Why have community colleges, with their dedication to teaching, failed to make the vital connection between outstanding teaching and scholarship? Why have community college leaders failed to understand that the failure to include scholarship as an important element in the community college philosophy is a flaw that diminishes the status of these institutions among other institutions of higher education? Why is scholarship the community college's Achilles' heel?

A major problem faced by community colleges, as well as the rest of higher education, is in defining scholarship. Ronald W. Walters, a Professor of Political Science at Howard University and President of the Black Faculty Congress, puts his finger squarely on the need for a definition of scholarship. As quoted in The Chronicle of Higher Education, he notes: "Many people in education get away with murder because they are not called upon to defend their definition of scholarship" (Blum, June 22, 1988). Harley L. Sachs, Associate Professor Emeritus of Humanities in the technical communications program at Michigan Technological University, is troubled by academia's inability or unwillingness to broaden its definition of what constitutes legitimate scholarly activities. According to Sachs, one result is that the

pressure on faculty members to publish has resulted in "mountains of articles of dubious scholarship and countless slipshod presentations at academic conventions." A major problem, he believes, is that most universities value only articles published in refereed journals and ignore the scholarship required to produce an article for a magazine or the Sunday newspaper, no matter how relevant the scholarly work might be to the individual's field, or how much the article might enhance the university's reputation (Sachs, 1988).

What constitutes scholarship in the community college is even less clear than it is at most four-year institutions because most community college professionals, unlike most faculty members at four-year institutions, have never pretended that research is a part of their professional activities. Indeed, most community college faculty and administrators reject the traditional approach to research as a legitimate undertaking for most community college professionals. When the community college rejected research for its faculty and administrators, a void was created in the lives of many community college professionals, thereby preventing them from achieving their full potential as teachers and administrators. It is now time for community colleges to move to fill that void through a commitment to scholarship.

A commitment to scholarship by community college professionals requires an understanding of why scholarship is important to the community college mission and an understanding

of how research and scholarship are different. One of the few statements on the role of scholarship in achieving the community college mission recently appeared in the report of the Commission on the Future of Community Colleges.

> "While not every community college faculty member is a publishing researcher, each should be a dedicated scholar--including those involved in technical and applied education. But for this to be a realistic goal, the meaning of scholarship must be broadened.
>
> In addition to the scholarship of discovering knowledge, through research, it is also important to recognize the scholarship of integrating knowledge, through curriculum development, the scholarship of applying knowledge, through service, and, above all, the scholarship of presenting knowledge, through effective teaching. These are areas of vital importance to community colleges" (Commission on the Future of Community Colleges, 1988).

Another source refers to the "scholarship of teaching," suggesting that too often academics draw a sharp contrast between scholarly research and teaching assignments. To quote:

> "But teaching offers many opportunities to use scholarly skills. Evidence of scholarly accomplishments is evident in . . . the 'corpus of artifacts or products developed in connection with instruction'--course syllabi, case analyses, teaching

plans, lecture notes, case histories, and examinations. A course syllabus provides opportunities for the exploration and evaluation of the literature of a field or course. A case analysis offers opportunities for systematic inquiry and rigorous reasoning about the substantive issues in that statement. A teaching plan evidences the instructor's creativity in the process of planning for the discussion, in the use of supplementary readings and exercises, and his or her understanding of what is known and what remains to be discovered about the substantive issues raised by the case" (C. Roland Christensen with Abby J. Hansen, 1987).

Certainly community college professionals, with their dedication to teaching, can identify with and endorse the "scholarship of teaching."

The role of scholarship in the community college has never been discussed extensively by any large number of community college leaders. Therefore, a first step to understanding the importance of scholarship to the community college mission is to define scholarship and research and to consider the definitions in light of the community college mission. My definitions are as follows:

<u>Scholarship</u> is the systematic pursuit of a topic, an objective, rational inquiry that involves critical analysis. It requires the precise

> **observing, organizing, and recording of information in the search for truth and order. Scholarship is the umbrella under which research falls, for research is but one form of scholarship. Scholarship results in a product that is shared with others and that is subject to the criticism of individuals qualified to judge the product. This product may take the form of a book review, an annotated bibliography, a lecture, a review of existing research on a topic, a speech that is a synthesis of the thinking on a topic. Scholarship requires that one have a solid foundation in one's professional field and that one keep up with the developments in that field.**

If one accepts the above definitions, the majority of community college professionals should engage in traditional research to any great extent. (The term "traditional research" is used here to distinguish it from applied research, a concept that would include the research on teaching or the "teacher-researcher," an emerging field of study for community college professionals.) Based upon the above definitions, one must conclude that all community college professionals should be scholars, for it is through scholarship that a disciplined passion for learning manifests itself, and it is this passion for learning that sustains effective teaching and effective

administration. As Timothy S. Healy, President of Georgetown University, observes, "Scholarship keeps the professor himself alive, gives him confidence in his own exposition and usually makes him blessedly unafraid to acknowledge ignorance or even error." Further, "The excitement of learning itself, the commitment that it draws from all of us, is a common anchor in our profession . . . the basis of the respect we have each for each and . . . the only solid ground on which civility can rest" (Healy, 1988). A community college English faculty member echoes the same theme in his plea for community college faculty members to publish the results of their scholarship. "Writing teachers who write and publish can feel a sense of professional fulfillment by contributing new ideas, perspectives and information to the profession, and thus are producers rather than merely consumers in their field; writing teachers who write and publish are actively involved in the profession, which reflects well on their institution and community colleges in general" (Kroll, 1989). The common bond between President Healy and the English instructor is scholarship, for each, in his own way, recognizes scholarship as the tie that binds them to a common profession with common values and common goals.

Why have community colleges given too little attention to scholarship? Community college faculty pride themselves on being committed to effective teaching, as do liberal arts colleges, state colleges and universities, and the undergraduate schools at leading research universities. In their zeal to call attention

to the community college as a teaching institution, its supporters have failed to acknowledge the vital link between teaching and scholarship, have failed to acknowledge and understand that outstanding teaching requires constant learning, constant intellectual renewal, and cannot exist without understanding and applying scholarship. Community college faculty and administrators must not be excused from engaging in scholarship because community colleges are not research institutions. Engaging in scholarly activities is critical to the community college professional since the intellectual stimulation and satisfaction that often accompanies research is missing for most of them; therefore, it is imperative that they engage in scholarship as a means of professional renewal, for unless teachers and administrators renew themselves through constant learning, they are likely to lose the spark that lights those intellectual fires that are inherent in outstanding teachers and administrators.

A second reason scholarship is low on the community college professional's agenda is the unwillingness of community colleges to recognize and reward scholarly activities. Rarely is scholarship even mentioned in the faculty promotion and retention process, much less viewed as an important consideration in that process. As a matter of fact, on some campuses if a faculty member or administrator becomes too scholarly (a contradiction in terms, one hopes), he or she is likely to end up as something of an academic outcast. A flagrant example of the failure of some

community college administrators to understand and appreciate scholarship as vital to the academic profession came to me in an unsolicited letter. The event described in the correspondence occurred after the author had just published a textbook. His story: "I was called into the President's office. I prepared myself to accept modestly his congratulations, and thanks for bringing honor to the College. You can imagine my shock when he said, 'You didn't do any of this work on College time did you?' The message was clear." The story had a happy ending, however. The author now works with a new president and both he and the president have a common view of the community college professional, a view that includes a devotion to scholarship.

A third reason, and one that is closely related to the rewards system, is the failure of community college presidents and deans of instruction to emphasize and promote scholarly activities for themselves. In surveys of community college presidents and deans of instruction I conducted, one question asked related to the scholarly activities of presidents and deans. Presidents ranked the ability to produce scholarly publications a distant seventeenth on a list of 17 items. While the deans were not asked to rank the ability to produce scholarly publications as a skill required of their position, scholarly activities were not viewed as being important to their success as deans. Presidents and academic leaders who do not hold scholarly activity as central to their own role are unlikely to see it as important for others. Moreover, by placing emphasis on

scholarship in the evaluation process, presidents and deans would increase pressure on themselves to be scholars, a situation they may deem impractical and undesirable.

A fourth reason community college leaders have paid to little attention to scholarship is that many community college professionals have failed to realize that their obligation to their profession goes well beyond their obligation to their job. Why do obligations to the job overshadow obligations to the profession, to scholarship? Teaching faculty members are required to teach 15 credit hours a week or more, to advise students, to hold office hours, to attend faculty and division meetings, to serve on a seemingly endless number of committees, and to engage in any number of "job-related" requirements that go along with their employment. Most administrators find the pace just as hectic, often working weekends to catch up with the demands of the office, <u>of the job</u>. Nevertheless, thinking in terms of the job rather than of the profession, with its inherent obligation to scholarship, results in neglect of scholarship, in part because community college faculty and administrators are rebelling against doing any more than is already required by the job, a serious mistake and one that is deadening to members of the academic profession.

A fifth reason many community college professionals neglect scholarship is that they have been drawn into the age-old and seemingly endless debate, intellectually and emotionally, if not literally, of teaching versus research. Turning again to

President Healy who places the debate of scholarship (his word) versus teaching in perspective for community colleges as well as for all of higher education:

> "The debate is quite simply founded on a false premise. The two activities, teaching and scholarship, are not incompatible, even less opposed. It is true that the first work of any university is the instruction of undergraduates. It is not true that this teaching bears no relation to research and scholarship. As a matter of fact, it seems to me that these two great works stand as cause and effect. All other goods of the university flow from its scholarship, and without it all of them are diminished, indeed suspect" (Healy, 1988).

In an earlier discussion of scholarship, I wrote the following:

> "The debate of teaching versus research is not even relevant to those who work, teach and administer in the community college. Often, however, the debate of teaching versus research serves as a smoke screen for those administrators and faculty who use the 'We are not research institutions' argument as an excuse for not pursuing scholarship. <u>The debate for the community college professional is not one of teaching versus research, but rather one of the community college faculty member as teacher and scholar versus teacher</u>

only. Every faculty member must face the question: can one be an effective teacher or administrator without being a scholar?" (Vaughan, 1988, p. 30.)

Once the debate is viewed in this context, it takes on new dimensions and is not only relevant to community college professionals, but may be critical to the success of the community college in the future, especially if community colleges are to be full members of the higher education community.

A sixth reason is that faculty and administrators, in spite of the stand the community college has taken as an institution devoted to teaching, have rarely engaged in regular and systematic approaches to the evaluation and improvement of teaching that extend beyond individual classrooms. Evaluation procedures used in many community college classrooms, while valuable, often evaluate faculty performance and activities rather than what is taught and what is learned. While there are notable exceptions to this situation and while the "assessment movement" is changing some attitudes toward the evaluation of teaching and learning, the "scholarship of teaching," to borrow from the Christensen reference above, is still in its infancy and leaves much work to be done before the community college's claim to fame as a teaching institution can be documented.

Why engage in scholarship?

Community colleges are first and foremost institutions of higher education: the successful institution of higher education must be devoted to scholarship, for teaching alone is not enough; teaching without scholarship is the brokering of information, not the providing of intellectual leadership. Scholarship is necessary because it is the avenue through which community college faculty stay in touch with the academic enterprise; scholarship constantly pulls one back to learning, back to the college's mission, back to the core of the enterprise (Vaughan,1988, p. 29). Or, as I wrote on a previous occasion:

> "Scholarship, perhaps more than any other characteristic, distinguishes teaching in an institution of higher education as a unique profession in our society, a profession that cannot settle for a snapshot of current or past knowledge but views knowledge as dynamic and views effective teaching as requiring constant inquiry, constant learning, and constant interacting with new and existing knowledge. . . . Scholarship gives us legitimacy in the world of higher education, the world we have chosen as our own. Scholarship in academia is truly the coin of the realm, for without it, we might as well be working with the local bank or a department store" (Vaughan, 1988, p. 29-30).

A philosophical discussion of scholarship may appear alien to pragmatic community college presidents and deans, whose greatest enemy is often the clock. Teaching faculty members who never seem to escape the heavy day-to-day teaching loads, office hours, student advising, and service on what seems to be perpetual committees find it difficult to move beyond the task at hand; moreover, dealing with the frustration inherent in meeting the demands of an open access institution takes its toll on most faculty. Pragmatic community college professionals need more than philosophy on which to build their house of the intellect.

There are many practical reasons for engaging in scholarship. Indeed, the "scholarship of teaching" as outlined above is a pragmatic approach to scholarship. Furthermore, even the most pragmatic community college professional realizes that the discipline and thought required to be a scholar sharpen the critical skills of the individual. Only through critical review and analysis can community college leaders formulate positions on the issues of the day and interpret those issues in a way that has meaning to the college, to its students, and ultimately to society. Critical review and analysis of the issues are required if community colleges are to receive community support, funding, and ultimately students. Through scholarship, community college leaders can ask and answer the difficult questions they face now and will likely face in the future (Vaughan, 1988, p. 30).

Moreover, from a practical point of view, scholarship will enhance the standing of community college faculty and

administrators in a profession that reveres scholarship in theory, if not always in practice. Scholarship produces competence in the individual and respectability among peers, characteristics that are essential to membership in one's profession (Vaughan, 1988, p. 30).

Enhancing scholarship in the community college

What can community college leaders do to enhance scholarship? The most obvious way is to include scholarship as an important part of the rewards system. While rewarding scholarship is an alien concept to many community college leaders, it is not unheard of. The community college English faculty member already cited who advocates that community college faculty publish the results of their scholarship believes the rewards for scholarship will be forthcoming. He writes: "My professional publications will not only bring me personal satisfaction, but institutional recognition and (eventually) financial reward" (Kroll, 1989). In those colleges with rank and tenure, scholarship should be an important consideration in granting tenure and promotion in rank. There is some danger in this approach, however. Community colleges must not fall into a "scholarship or perish" syndrome. Scholarship must be just one more way of viewing faculty performance, albeit an important one (Vaughan, 1988, p. 30).

Granting tenure and rank are not the only rewards available to community college professionals. Community colleges should devote more time, energy, and creativity to finding ways of

honoring those who labor in the vineyards of the people's college. Some colleges have realized the value of "celebration of self." For example, Midlands Technical College in Columbia, South Carolina, holds an annual celebration in honor of the scholars among its faculty and administrators. Replete with wine and cheese, music, a formal ceremony, and congratulatory words by the president, administrators and faculty join hands to honor Midlands Technical College and the profession in which they all hold membership. The Vice President for Educational Affairs at Midlands recommends that colleges routinely collect information about faculty and administrative scholarship; that the rewards associated with scholarship become part of the college culture; and that scholarship be viewed as important and rewarded just as are teaching and community services (Holland, 1989).

Each community college should institute a forum devoted to scholarship whereby faculty and administrators can demonstrate their commitment to and accomplishments in scholarly activities. For example, Piedmont Virginia Community College in Charlottesville, Virginia, holds an "Excellence in Instruction Seminar" each month (on Friday afternoons at 3:00 p.m.!) devoted to the sharing of ideas which enhance teaching and learning and which serve as an avenue for professional development for both faculty and administrators. A recent seminar was devoted to the role of scholarship in advancing the community college mission. Faculty conceived and faculty staged, these seminars offer faculty and administrators the opportunity to share their work

with colleagues from throughout the college and to receive the immediate reaction of their colleagues. These forums are especially important in those small and often rural community colleges that suffer from provincialism resulting from their isolation. The forum should be conducted in the best academic tradition: with discussions, criticisms, and questions constituting an important part of each forum. Community college faculty and administrators should be leaders in promoting scholarship that encompasses a number of disciplines, for rarely would the scholarly forum be conducted for just members of a single discipline as is often the case on university campuses and at practically all professional meetings; rather, all faculty members who are interested would be encouraged to attend and participate in the forum.

Released time, summer employment and study, and other avenues should be available for scholarly pursuits. When time is made available, faculty should devote their energy to something other than the seemingly endless course restructuring. Course revision should lead to new and exciting courses that call upon the scholarly abilities of faculty members; too often, however, course revision results in nothing more than old wine in new bottles, and in many cases old wine in old bottles with new packaging.

Presidents and deans of instruction must lead the way in establishing a climate on campus that promotes scholarship. This requires that presidents and deans must be a scholars. The

president must be the institution's educational leader; as educational leader the president must understand that the keystone to educational leadership is scholarship. The dean of instruction must be the institution's academic leader, a role that equally requires that the dean be a scholar.

Faculty members and administrators should take the "scholarship of teaching" seriously and use a research model in evaluating and improving their teaching. If the concept of "teacher-researcher" proves to be a field of research in which community college professionals engage, then this approach to research may well emerge as an important facet of the community college professional's scholarship.

Finally, community college professionals must get over the feeling that they inferior to other members of the higher education community. When scholarship becomes a part of the everyday scene on campus, community college professionals will find that they as capable of doing scholarly work as are their four-year counterparts; that they are bringing that same pragmatic approach to scholarship that they have brought to making the open access community college successful; <u>that they are doing scholarship as well as talking about it</u>. This alone would be unique enough in higher education to get the attention of all who are interested in the search for truth and knowledge.

Meanwhile, until community college leaders place scholarly activities near the top of their agenda, scholarship will remain the community college's Achilles' heel.

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